

What is claimed:

1. A multi-media communication device for serving a selected one of a plurality of data appliance modules, the multi-media communication device comprising:

a network communication circuit coupled to a network medium for exchanging frames of data over the network medium;

a docking bay for coupling to a selected data appliance module;

a data appliance module communication circuit coupled to the docking bay for exchanging data with the selected data appliance module;

a data appliance module support circuit comprising:

means for reading a network address of a service provider stored in at least one of the multi-media communication device and the selected data appliance module;

means for directing the network communication circuit to establish a communication session with the service provider; and

means for translating a frame of data originated by the service provider to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit.

2. The multi-media communication device of claim 1, wherein the means for translating a frame of data originated by the service provider to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

means for extracting a value of a data element from the frame of data;

means for associating the value with a data element; and

means for generating a signal that identifies the data element and the value.

3. The multi-media communication device of claim 1 wherein the means for translating a frame of data originated by the service provider to a signal compatible with transmission to the appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

means for extracting a segment of compressed real time media data from the frame of data; and

means for generating a signal that includes the segment chronologically sequenced amongst other segments of compressed real time media data.

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4. The multi-media communication device of claim 1, wherein the data appliance module support circuit further comprises:

means for translating a signal received from the data appliance module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the service provider.

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5. The multi-media communication device of claim 4, wherein the means for translating a frame of data originated by the service provider to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

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means for extracting a value of a data element from the frame of data;

means for associating the value with a data element;

means for generating a signal that identifies the data element and the value;

and

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means for translating a signal received from the data appliance module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the service provider comprising:

means for extracting a value of a data element from the signal;

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means for extracting identification of the data element from the signal;

means for generating a frame that includes the value and the identity of the data element.

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6. The multi-media communication device of claim 4, wherein the means for translating a frame of data originated by the service provider to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

means for extracting a segment of compressed real time media data from the frame of data;

means for generating a signal that includes the segment chronologically sequenced amongst other segments of compressed real time media data; and

5 wherein the means for translating a signal received from the data appliance module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the service provider comprises:

means for extracting a value of a data element from the signal;

10 means for extracting identification of the data element from the signal;

means for generating a frame that includes the value and the identity of the data element.

7. The multi-media communication device of claim 4 further comprising:
a subscriber data interface comprising:

a display screen,

subscriber input means; and

a subscriber interface client circuit comprising:

means for receiving a signal from the subscriber input means
that identifies a remote data source,

means for directing the network communication circuit to
establishing a communication session with the remote data source,
and

means for translating data originated by the remote data
25 source to signals compatible for display of the data on the display screen.

8. The multi-media communication device of claim 7 wherein the means
for translating a frame of data originated by the service provider to a signal
30 compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

means for extracting a value of a data element from the frame of data;

means for associating the value with a data element;

means for generating a signal that identifies the data element and the value;

and

wherein the means for translating a signal received from the data appliance

5 module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the service provider comprises:

means for extracting a value of a data element from the signal;

means for extracting identification of the data element from the signal;

10 and

means for generating a frame that includes the value and the identity of the data element.

9. The multi-media communication device of claim 7 wherein the means
15 for translating a frame of data originated by the service provider to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

means for extracting a segment of compressed real time media data from the frame of data;

20 means for generating a signal that includes the segment chronologically sequenced amongst other segments of compresses real time media data; and

wherein the means for translating a signal received from the data appliance module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the service
25 provider comprises:

means for extracting a value of a data element from the signal;

means for extracting identification of the data element from the signal;

and

30 means for generating a frame that includes the value and the identity of the data element.

10. The multi-media communication device of claim 1 further comprising:

power means for providing power to said data appliance module.

11. A multi-media communication management system for serving a selected one of a plurality of data appliance modules, the system comprising:

5 a local content server for providing information content, that is compatible with a subscriber interface of the selected appliance module, on a network media; and

at least one multi-media communication device comprising:

a docking station for coupling to the selected data appliance module;

10 a network communication circuit coupled to a network medium for exchanging frames of data with the local content server over the network medium;

a data appliance module communication circuit coupled to the docking bay for exchanging data with the selected appliance module;

a data appliance module support circuit comprising:

15 means for reading a network address of the local content server from a memory stored in at least one of the multi-media communication device and the appliance module,

means for directing the network communication circuit to establish a communication session with the local content server utilizing the network address, and

20 means for translating a frame of data originated by the local content server to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit.

25 12. The system of claim 11 wherein the means for translating a frame of data originated by the local content server to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

means for extracting a value of a data element from the frame of data;

30 means for associating the value with a data element; and

means for generating a signal that identifies the data element and the value.

13. The system of claim 11 wherein the means for translating a frame of data originated by the local content server to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

5 means for extracting a segment of compressed real time media data from the frame of data; and

means for generating a signal that includes the segment chronologically sequenced amongst other segments of compressed real time media data.

10 14. The system claim 11, wherein the data appliance module support circuit further comprises:

means for translating a signal received from the data appliance module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the local content server.

15 15. The system of claim 14 wherein the means for translating a frame of data originated by the local content server to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

20 means for extracting a value of a data element from the frame of data;

means for associating the value with a data element;

means for generating a signal that identifies the data element and the value;

and

25 wherein the means for translating a signal received from the data appliance module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the service provider comprises:

means for extracting a value of a data element from the signal,

30 means for extracting identification of the data element from the signal,

and

means for generating a frame that includes the value and the identity

of the data element.

16. The system of claim 14 wherein the means for translating a frame of data originated by the local content provider to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module by the data appliance module communication circuit comprises:

means for extracting a segment of compressed real time media data from the frame of data;

means for generating a signal that includes the segment chronologically sequenced amongst other segments of compresses real time media data; and

wherein the means for translating a signal received from the data appliance module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the local content server comprises:

means for extracting a value of a data element from the signal,

means for extracting identification of the data element from the signal,

and

means for generating a frame that includes the value and the identity of the data element.

17. A method of translating subscriber information content between a information content server and a selected data appliance module, the method comprising:

detecting an data appliance module coupled to a docking bay;

determining a network address of an information content server that provides information content that is compatible with a subscriber interface of the data appliance module;

establishing a communication session with the information content server utilizing the network address; and

translating a frame of data originated by the information content server to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module through the docking bay.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the step of translating a frame of data originated by the information content server to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module comprises:

- 5 extracting a value of a data element from the frame of data;
associating the value with the data element; and
generating a signal that identifies the data element and the value.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein the step of translating a frame of data originated by the information content server to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module comprises:

- 10 extracting a segment of compressed real time media data from the frame of data; and
generating a signal that includes the segment chronologically sequenced
15 amongst other segments of compresses real time media data.

20. The method of claim 17 further comprising:

- translating a signal received from the data appliance module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the information content server.
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21. The method of claim 17 wherein the step of translating a frame of data originated by the information content server to a signal compatible with transmission to the data appliance module comprises:

- 25 extracting a value of a data element from the frame of data;
associating the value with the data element;
generating a serial signal that identifies the data element and the value; and
wherein the step of translating a signal received from the data appliance module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance
30 module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the information content server comprises:

extracting a value of a data element from the signal,

extracting identification of the data element from the signal, and
generating a frame that includes the value and the identity of the data
element.

- 5 22. The method of claim 20 wherein the step of translating a frame of
data originated by the information content server to a signal compatible with
transmission to the data appliance module comprises:

extracting a segment of compressed real time media data from the frame of
data;

10 generating a signal that includes the segment chronologically sequenced
amongst other segments of compressed real time media data; and

wherein the step of translating a signal received from the data appliance
module communication circuit representing subscriber control of the data appliance
module to a frame of data compatible with a protocol recognized by the information
15 content server comprises:

extracting a value of a data element from the signal,

extracting identification of the data element from the signal, and

generating a frame that includes the value and the identity of the data
element.

- 20 23. The method of claim 17 further comprising:

providing power to said data appliance module from said multi-media
communication device.